Assassinations Unit Denied More Funds Pending 2 Inquiries

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The House Assassinations Committee, accused of wiretapping and other illegal operations, has been denied any additional funding until it answers the charges and justifies the $4 million already spent.

The House Administration Committee postponed action yesterday on the assassinations panel's request for an additional $790,000 to finish investigating the murders of John Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

Rep. Frank Thompson Jr., D-N.J., chairman of the Administration Committee, said his panel also will be closely watching what the Assassination Committee brings out in public hearings beginning next Monday — whether the findings are productive or "a bust."

A key witness at those hearings will be James Earl Ray, serving a 99-year term in Tennessee for the King slayiing.

THE ASSASSINATIONS committee, headed by Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, has spent $4 million in two years of operation. Monday, a man identifying himself as an undercover agent for the panel said in St. Louis he carried out illegal wiretaps and mail interceptions as part of his assignment.

The man, Oliver Patterson, also said the committee staff supplied him with written answers when he gave the panel a deposition on his contacts with Jerry Ray, James Earl's brother.

Patterson, who said he has worked for the FBI since 1971 and for the assassinations committee for the past several months, made the allegations in a news conference at which Mark Lane, James Earl Ray's lawyer, also appeared.

G. Robert Blakey, the assassination committee's chief counsel, told reporters yesterday he did not recall Patterson as a member of the investigative staff, but did believe he had appeared as a subpoenaed witness.

IN ANY CASE, Blakey said, Patterson's allegations "will be taken very seriously and will be investigated fully . . . I'm going to find out what happened."

The administration committee directed the assassinations panel to reply to the charges after Congress returns Sept. 5 from its Labor Day recess.

In delaying a decision on the request for further funding, the administration panel followed the recommendation of its subcommittee on accounts, which concluded Monday the assassinations committee has more than enough money to carry it through Oct. 1.

Even if the extra money is approved, the outlay will be subject to approval by the full House, where there have been increasing signs of uneasiness about the committee's operations.